Federal Aviation Administration

Russ Chew 1-800-FAA-NEWS Phone Message
January 13, 2006

Hello, this is Russ Chew with this week's update for January 13th.

In our continuing effort to improve communications and deliver information to you in a timely and cost-effective manner, we have delivered 47 computer kiosks to 21 centers, 11 TRACONS, and 15 Towers.   These kiosks provide information about jobs, pay and benefits, as well as employee services and work tools. Other features include a link to the on-line FAA phone book and Employee Express.

While we are on the subject of communications, I'd like to announce that Claudia Bogard, a veteran government executive, has been appointed as the ATO's Director of Communications. She will report to our ATO Vice President of Communications, Sandra Sanchez. Claudia has earned widespread recognition for her outstanding performance as director of corporate communications for the Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

Also, earlier this week the Administrator announced that David Bowen has accepted the position of Chief Information Officer and Assistant Administrator for Information Services. This selection is very important to our need to integrate, consolidate, and secure the thousands of non-standard I.T. systems that, right now, cost much more than necessary.

On the capital side of the business, I am happy to report the software development phase for our En Route Automation Modernization program, or

ERAM, has just been completed. ERAM will replace the en route Host computer system, the backbone of today's National Airspace System.

Many in our field operations ask why ERAM is so important to us. There are many operational, technical, and strategic reasons; but let me mention just two. First, ERAM represents one of the most complex and most expensive acquisitions that we've ever undertaken. Since many of the criticisms of FAA have been about our keeping our multi-billion dollar acquisition programs on schedule and within budget, this one has everyone's close attention – especially those who oversee our budget and look after our owners fiscal performance expectations.

So I am very proud of the ERAM team to date, because they have done just that. At this important point, the program has just finished the software development phase – about one and a quarter million lines of code -- and is now poised to begin the next phase – testing.   This is a very significant accomplishment because software development is where many of our programs experience schedule slippages, along with the related cost overruns.

The second reason is that beyond the challenge of keeping such a large program on schedule and within budget, ERAM represents a milestone in laying the technical foundation for our future. ERAM will enable us to make improvements in managing air traffic that are just not attainable using the existing HOST computer system today – a system which is based on a very old and hard-to-support software standard.

With a modern foundation like ERAM, we will be able to more easily, and more affordably, adjust airspace design and capacity, improve our safety tools for controllers, and integrate the system's information into a global network. When you hear the buzz-phrase "Network Enabled Operations", ERAM is one of the key platforms in getting us in position to move to the Next Generation Air Transportation System.

Of course, none of this technology will be useful to us unless it supports improving the way our people work, especially those who directly deliver our safety service to our customers every day. With the onslaught of new growth challenges ahead – in new very-light-jets, very-large commercial aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, and more congested metropolitan reliever airports, we will need systems like ERAM as a foundation in our never-ending search for a better, more flexible, efficient, productive, and cost-effective way of delivering our service.

That's it for this week. Thanks for listening, and I'll talk to you again next week.